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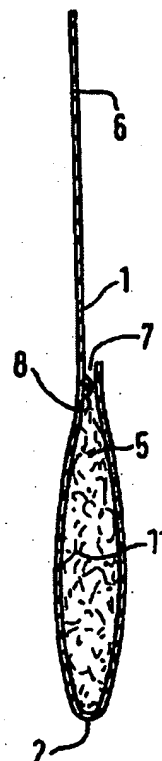
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(54) Title: **RESEALABLE POUCH FOR TOBACCO**

(57) Abstract

A pouch (1) for tobacco comprises a pocket (5) for containing the tobacco and has a mouth (7) providing access to the interior of the pocket (5). It also has a flap (6) capable of folding over the pocket (5) at or near the mouth. The mouth (7) of the pocket (5) is provided, at one edge thereof, with a closure strip (9) adapted to interengage with a complementary closure strip (10) provided at the other edge for reclosing the mouth (7) of the pocket (5) to form a seal. The pouch keeps tobacco contained in the sealed pocket fresh by preserving the aroma and moisture content of the tobacco over a prolonged period up to and after the time of first use.



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RESEALABLE POUCH FOR TOBACCO

The present invention relates to a resealable pouch for tobacco. More particularly, it relates to a pouch formed of a flexible plastics material having a pocket for containing tobacco and a flap for folding over the opening of the pocket to prevent spillage of the tobacco from the pocket.

A pouch for tobacco is conventionally formed from a rectangular sheet of a thermoplastics material folded over itself and welded together at the edges to form a pocket. A portion of the rectangular sheet extending beyond the opening of the pocket is folded over the pocket to form a closing flap. Such pouches are filled with tobacco, sealed and wrapped for sale to the consumer. The means used to seal the filled pouch after the filling operation in the factory is, after being opened by the consumer, either completely non-resealable or is resealable only to a limited extent. The problem with such conventional pouches is that, after initial opening by the consumer, they are incapable of preventing spillage of the contents and are incapable of preventing the loss of moisture and aroma from the tobacco in the pouch.

The object of the present invention is to provide a pouch for tobacco which is resealable and, therefore, capable of better moisture retention and of preventing spillage of the contents of the pouch.

The present invention provides a pouch for tobacco comprising a pocket for containing the tobacco and having a mouth providing access to the interior of the pocket and a flap capable of folding over the pocket at or near the mouth wherein the mouth of the pocket is provided, at one edge, with a closure strip adapted to

interengage with a complementary closure strip provided at the other edge to reclosably seal the mouth of the pocket.

The reclosable seal provided at the mouth of the pocket makes it possible for the consumer to seal the pocket after accessing the contents of the pocket thereby preventing loss of the contents by spillage from the pocket. Also, the seal reduces the ingress of air into the pocket and the loss of moisture from the contents of the pocket ensuring that the contents remain moist and do not dry out. Thus, the pouch according to the present invention has an increased capacity for keeping the tobacco fresh (by the preservation of aroma and moisture) over a prolonged period up to and after the time of first use.

The pouch can be formed simply from a first rectangular flexible plastics sheet on which a pocket is provided by adhesively bonding a second smaller rectangle of similar material along three of its edges to the first sheet. Preferably, however, the pouch is formed from a blank comprising a rectangular sheet of plastics material by folding over the sheet on itself and welding together the overlapping edges to form a pocket. The portion of the original blank extending beyond the mouth of the pocket forms the flap which can then be folded over the pocket.

The pouch is typically formed from a sheet or film of a thermoplastics material such as a polyolefin, e.g., polyethylene. The sheet or film may be a laminate of two or more layers of similar or different thermoplastics material, metalised or metal coated material and/or printed paper sheet as is used in the manufacture of conventional pouches.

According to the invention there is provided at the mouth of the pocket in the pouch a reclosable fastener. This is achieved by

providing one edge of the mouth of the pocket with a first closure strip and the opposing edge of the mouth of the pocket with a second closure strip having a profile complementary to that of the first closure strip and capable of interengaging therewith.

Typically, the reclosable fastener is a zipper, preferably a plastics zipper one element of which is a plastics strip having at least one groove and the other element of which is a plastics strip having at least one rib of profile complementary to the groove or grooves of the other strip.

In the manufacture of the pouch the opposing edges of the mouth of the pocket are provided with the complementary sealing strips typically by thermally bonding the strips to the opposing surfaces of the pocket at or near the mouth thereof. Preferably, the opposing and complementary sealing strips at their ends are sealed together, typically by ultrasonic crushing, to provide permanent closure of the fastener at its ends.

The invention will now be described by way of example only with reference to the Figures in which

Figure 1 shows a view of one embodiment of a pouch of the present invention with an open flap;

Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view of the pouch of Figure 1 showing a zipper along the line A-A in the direction shown by the arrows.

Figure 3 is a diagrammatic cross-sectional view of the zipper in Figure 2.

Figure 1 illustrates a pouch 1 according to the present invention. The pouch is formed of a rectangle of flexible thermoplastics sheet, e.g., polyethylene, which has been folded back along itself to form a base 2 and sealed along side edges 3 and 4, for instance, by thermal welding. The pouch has a pocket portion 5 and

a flap portion 6. The flap 6 is shown in an open configuration although this will normally be folded over the pocket portion when access to the pocket is not required.

The pocket portion has an openable mouth 7 to allow access to the pocket. On the inside of the mouth and shown holding the mouth closed is a plastic zipper 8 (Figure 2). The zipper 8, as shown in Figure 3, comprises two opposing strips (9, 10) having complementary rib and groove profiles which when pressed together interengage with each other and, thus, close the mouth of the pocket. The complementary shapes of the rib and groove may be chosen such that the rib and groove 'grip' each other and form an interlockable closure.

The opposing strips (9,10) of the plastic zipper are bonded to the respective opposing surfaces of the mouth of the pocket by thermal welding. The end regions of the opposing strips are permanently sealed, by ultrasonically crushing them together, to prevent opening of the fastener from its ends.

The pocket portion 5, when kept sealed by virtue of the closed plastic zipper 8, maintains the freshness of tobacco 11 contained in the pocket portion of the pouch.

CLAIMS

1. A pouch for tobacco comprising a pocket (5) for containing the tobacco and having a mouth (7) providing access to the interior of the pocket (5) and a flap (6) capable of folding over the pocket (5) at or near the mouth (7) wherein the mouth (7) of the pocket (5) is provided, along one edge, with a closure strip (9) adapted to interengage with a complementary closure strip (10) provided along the other edge to reclosably seal the mouth (7) of the pocket (5).
2. A pouch according to claim 1, wherein the mouth (1) of the pocket (5) is provided, along one edge, with a first extruded plastics strip (10) having a grooved surface and along the other edge with a second extruded plastics strip (9) having a ribbed surface wherein the ribbed surface of the second strip (9) and the grooved surface of the first strip (10) are adapted to form an interlocking seal when pressed together.
3. A tobacco-containing pouch comprising a pouch (1) according to either one of claims 1 or 2 and, contained within the pocket (5) of the pouch, an amount of tobacco, wherein the moisture loss and aroma loss from the tobacco contained within the pocket (5) is reduced by maintaining the closure strip (9, 10) at or near the mouth (7) of the pocket (5) in a sealed condition except when access to the contents of the pocket is required.

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FIG. 1.

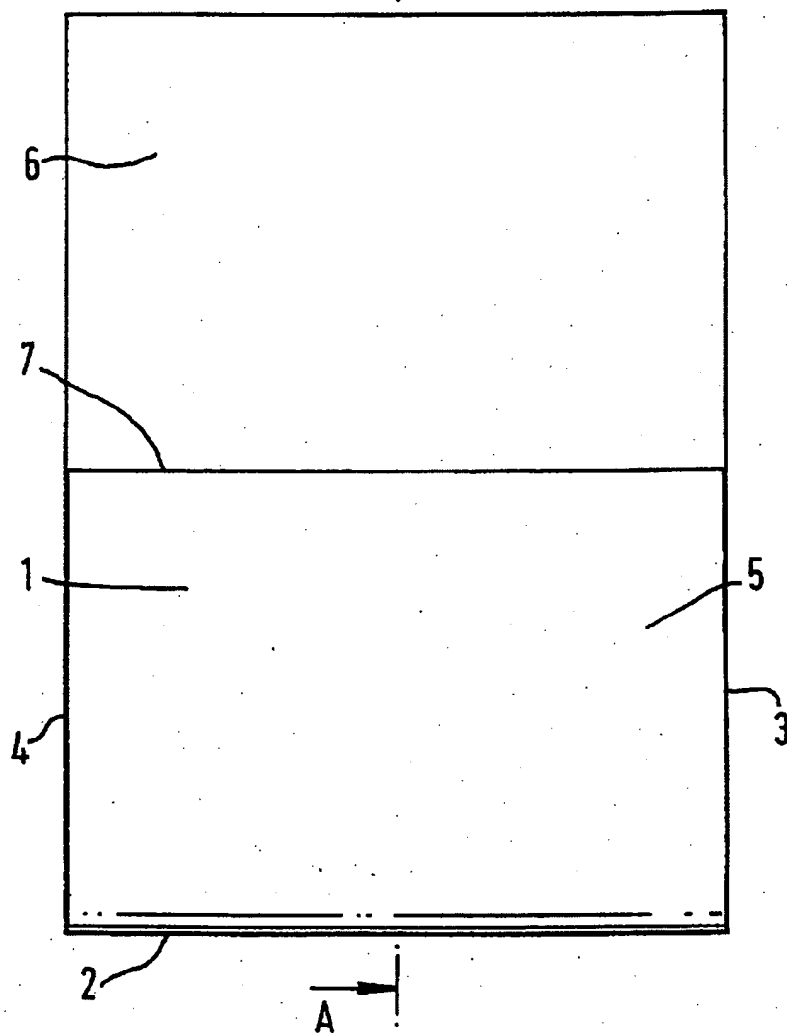


FIG. 2.

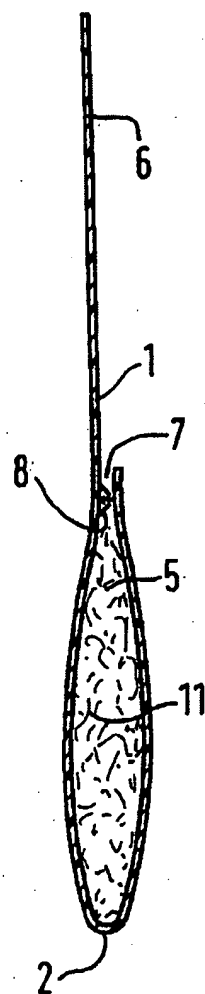
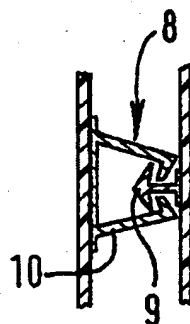


FIG. 3.



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

national Application No
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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER IPC 6 B65D33/25 B65D81/22 A24F23/02 A44B19/00		
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
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Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	AT 366 340 B (VOGT) 13 April 1982 see page 2-5; figures 1-4	1-3
X	GB 2 034 274 A (SALVE S.A.) 4 June 1980 see page 2, line 12 - page 4, line 10; figures 1-7	1-3
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A	EP 0 450 741 A (COLGATE-PALMOLIVE COMP.) 9 October 1991	
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Date of the actual completion of the international search 3 September 1998		Date of mailing of the international search report 10/09/1998
Name and mailing address of the ISA European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patent/aan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3018		Authorized officer Vollering, J

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